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SUBJECT: ACTIVIST BRIEFLY DETAINED IN NAMANGAN; POLITICAL
PRISONER TO BE RELEASED IN JULY

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: On May 8, the independent Centrasia.ru reported that human rights activist and former Radio Liberty correspondent Nosir Zokirov was arrested in Namangan for allegedly insulting a police officer. On May 12, the independent Harakat.net website reported that Zokirov had been released after spending two nights in custody. Separately, human rights activist Bakhtiyor Hamroev reported that the lawyer of political prisoner Mamarajab Nazarov was recently able to visit his client in prison, the first time in recent memory a lawyer has been able to meet with a political prisoner. In addition, the lawyer was reportedly told by the prison director that Nazarov would be released early for good behavior in July. Although Zokirov's brief detention is evidence that government authorities continues to harass independent activists, the news that Nazarov's lawyer was able to visit his client in prison and that he could be released from prison in July are positive developments. End summary.

ACTIVIST BRIEFLY DETAINED IN NAMANGAN

12. (U) On May 8, Chairman of the Committee for Individual Rights Marat Zohidov reported on the independent Centrasia.ru website that human rights activist and former Radio Liberty correspondent Nosir Zokirov was arrested in Namangan for insulting a police officer who had temporarily detained his son. According to Zohidov, Zokirov faced criminal charges of insulting the honor and dignity of a police officer. Zokirov's son had been detained on suspicion of theft and participation in a "street gang," and was later released.

13. (C) On May 12, poloff met with Jizzakh-based human rights activist Bakhtiyor Hamroev, a friend of Zokirov who had maintained close contact with Zokirov's family since the activist's arrest. According to Hamroev, Zokirov was charged with administrative offences (not criminal offences, as reported by Zohidov). Hamroev said that Zokirov's case was expected to be taken up by a court in Namangan and that he could be fined or sentenced to a maximum 15 day prison term.

14. (U) On May 12, the independent Harakat.net website

reported that Zokirov had been released after spending two nights in custody. According to the article, police also informed Zokirov that the charges against him had been dropped.

15. (SBU) Zokirov was previously imprisoned for several months on politically-motivated charges after the Andijon events in 2005. He also was a close friend of Alisher Saipov, an ethnic Uzbek journalist and Kyrgyz citizen who was killed by unknown assailants in Osh in October 2007.

HAMROEV REPORTS POLITICAL PRISONER TO BE RELEASED IN JULY

16. (C) During their meeting, Hamroev also reported to poloff that a defense attorney paid for by the Ezgulik human rights group was recently able to visit in prison Mamarajab Nazarov, a member of Ezgulik and the unregistered Birlik opposition who was sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment on politically-motivated charges of extortion in June 2006. According to Hamroev, this was the first time a lawyer had been granted access to a political prisoner in recent memory. The lawyer was also reportedly told by the prison director that Nazarov would be released early for good behavior at the end of July. Nazarov was included on lists of political prisoners to be considered for amnesty that both the United States and the European Union submitted to the government of Uzbekistan.

HAMROEV PRESENTS THANK YOU LETTER TO AMBASSADOR

17. (SBU) Hamroev also passed on to poloff a letter thanking the Ambassador for advocating on behalf of his son Ikhtiyor, who was amnestied and released from prison in February. In the letter, Hamroev writes that his son was released thanks to the efforts of the U.S. government. He also reiterates his support for greater dialogue between the Uzbek government and the United States, which he believes will result in the release of other political prisoners.

COMMENT

18. (C) Although Zokirov's brief detention is evidence that government authorities continues to harass independent activists, the news that Nazarov's lawyer was able to visit his client in prison and that he could be released from prison in July are positive developments. The two separate incidents demonstrate that the human rights situation continues to be mixed, with both negative and positive developments.
NORLAND